

Remarks

Claims 1-4 and the specification have been amended, and new claim 16 has been added. Review and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

Claim 4 has objected due to the inclusion of the phrase “wherein each of said teeth has a length of between....” Accordingly, claim 4 has been amended to primarily include the language suggested in the Office action. Claim 4 is also objected to on the basis that the claim includes English units and does not include metric units. Accordingly, claim 4 (as well as the text in the Detailed Description section) have been amended to include metric units along with English units.

Claims 2 and 3 have been amended to address the 35 U.S.C. §112 rejections thereto.

Claims 1, 3 and 5 are rejected as defining obvious subject matter over U.S. Pat. No. 2,573,861 to Meeker et al. in view of U.S. Pat. No. 4,021,914 to Leibendgut et al. or U.S. Pat. Application No. 2002/0066189 to Parrish et al. The Office action takes the position that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to utilize the attachment structures of the Leibendgut or Parrish references in the slicer of the Meeker reference. Accordingly, claim 1 has been amended to specify that the attachment portion can be generally rigidly coupled to the handle, and that the attachment portion can be manually decoupled, without the use of tools, from the handle such that the attachment portion and the handle are not generally rigidly coupled.

For example, as noted at page five of this application, 2nd full paragraph, the legs 60, 62 of the gripping plate are received in corresponding end openings 74, 76 of the handle 42, which rigidly couples the handle 42 and gripping plate 40. Furthermore, as discussed at page five, last paragraph, the tips 64, 66 of the gripping plate 40 can be dislodged from the opening 70 of the handle 42 by twisting the handle 42 while holding the gripping plate 40 stationary. The curved tips 64, 66 of the legs 60, 62 enable the legs 60, 62 to be dislodged from the end openings 74, 76 during the relative rotation.

In contrast, in the device of the Leibundgut et al. reference, a tool such as a screwdriver, pencil or the like must be utilized in order to separate the handle from the gripping plate (column 5, lines 6-20). In the device of the Parrish reference, the handle is not manually separable from the gripping plate. The Parrish reference does not disclose how the handle can be separated, and

indeed it appears that after assembly the handle cannot be separated without destroying the device. For example, the Parrish reference discloses that after the blade 12 is inserted into the handle, no further attachment means are needed (paragraph 29).

Accordingly, if the attachment structures of either the Leibundgut or Parrish references were to be used in the device of the Meeker reference, the resultant structure would lack the claimed attachment portion that can be manually decoupled from the handle without the use of tools. Thus it is submitted that claim 1 defines over the cited references.

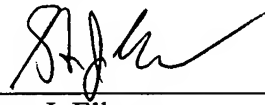
New claim 16 specifies that the handle has a closed axial end having a continuous outer surface such that the closed axial end lacks any auxiliary openings that communicate with the central opening. Support for this limitation can be found in the drawings of the originally-filed application (Figs. 3-5 and Fig. 8 illustrating the cap 43). In contrast, in the device of the Meeker reference, the handle 95 includes an opening to receive a fastener 97 therethrough. If the slicer of the Meeker reference were to be modified to include the leg design of either the Leibundgut or Parrish references, the handle of the Meeker reference would then have an unfilled opening which communicates with the central opening of the handle.

This arrangement would be unsatisfactory due to the unsanitary nature of the unfilled hole 97 in the handle. In particular, because slicers are typically used for food processing, the unfilled hole 97 would be prone to receiving bits of food and debris therein. Further, even if the hole 97 were to be filled, the filling could be prone to fall out, or could trap food materials between the filling and the handle. Accordingly, it is submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated to utilize the leg design of the Leibundgut or Parrish references in the device of the Meeker reference. Furthermore, if such a modification were to be undertaken, the subject matter of claim 16 would not result. Thus, it is submitted that claim 16 defines over the cited references.

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Amendment

Accordingly it is submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance, and a formal notice thereof is respectfully requested. The applicant(s) hereby authorizes the Commissioner under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a)(3) to treat any paper that is filed in this application which requires an extension of time as incorporating a request for such an extension. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required by this paper, or to credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 20-0809.

Respectfully submitted,



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